

THE NICARAGUA CANAL.

Important Interview Between Admiral Ammen and General Grant.

CONCESSION AND CAPITAL ASSURED.

General Grant Will Make It "The Crowning Effort of His Life."

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE HERALD.]

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 17, 1879.

Important was the visit of General Grant to the people of Philadelphia, far greater general interest, so far as the American people are concerned, has been centered in the meeting between the President and Admiral Ammen and the settlement of the Nicaragua Canal project. In this great scheme, since General Grant's name has been mentioned in connection with it, universal public curiosity has been felt. Therefore when the private telegram this morning announced the fact that Admiral Ammen had left Washington to meet General Grant here it was clearly evident that the crisis in the canal question, so far as the United States was concerned, had arrived. The Admiral reached the Continental Hotel at six o'clock to keep his engagement to dine with General Grant. The dinner, which was a purely social one, lasted about an hour and a half, after which the Admiral and the ex-President being alone, over the coffee, discussed the prospects of the Nicaragua Canal project. At nine o'clock the party drove to Mayor Stockley's home to attend the reception. Admiral Ammen was found at the house of James S. Biddle, after his return from the Mayor's, and, despite the lateness of the hour, courteously received the Herald correspondent and conversed for some time very frankly regarding the great project in which General Grant, Engineer Menocal and he are so deeply interested. The interview naturally took the following shape:

INTERVIEW WITH ADMIRAL AMMEN.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—The universal interest felt in the action taken, or to be taken, regarding the organization of the Nicaragua Canal Company must be at once my apology and my excuse, Admiral, for seeking this interview. Will you enlighten me?

ADMIRAL AMMEN (with good nature)—It is a subject very near to my own heart, I assure you, and I am glad to tell you what I know.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—General Grant is unquestionably favorable to the Nicaragua route, is he not?

ADMIRAL AMMEN—He has so expressed himself.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—Has he then consented to accept the presidency of this canal company?

ADMIRAL AMMEN—A direct answer to your question should only come with propriety from the General himself, but if you will permit me to answer at some length I think I can satisfy your curiosity fully. You must know, then, that your inquiry resolves itself into two propositions and a conclusion, namely:—First, can the desired concessions be obtained from Nicaragua? Second, can the capital necessary to build the canal be secured? If these can be answered strictly in the affirmative General Grant's assumption of the presidency is an assured fact.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—The proposition without answer to assume the form of a syllogism, Admiral, in which the two premises are to be established before the conclusion can be assured. Suppose we consider them. Then let me know about the concessions.

ADMIRAL AMMEN—Schott T. de Franco, the Nicaragua Minister to Italy, has just been to Washington, and as the personal friend of the President of Nicaragua, Schott T. de Franco is authorized to guarantee all that is desired. He knows the temper of the people thoroughly and as sure as that the leading men of the nation, irrespective of party or faction, see clearly the great advantages which such a canal would be to their country and will heartily co-operate. The matter had already been laid before the National Congress, and before the last advice left the concessions were as good as assured. The President of Nicaragua is moving with great energy in the matter, because he has discovered that the agents of certain foreign governments in his capital are employing every method to prejudice the Nicaraguan people against the project. Even the rival nations of the peninsula are sending agents to Nicaragua in the hope of defeating the Nicaraguan scheme, but their efforts have amounted to little. The self-interest of the critics is too evident to deceive many.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—What, then, shall we say, in brief, of what we may call our minor premises?

ADMIRAL AMMEN—That it is assured. Indeed, to speak more frankly, we almost know that it is on the road to us now. You may say that we have not the slightest anxiety.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—That obstacle to General Grant's acceptance being disposed of, please digress enough to give me the chief point of these concessions.

ADMIRAL AMMEN—The details, without which the information you ask could not be properly laid before your readers, cannot be gone into on this occasion. You could not prevent the canal, however, to be under the absolute management, the company paying to the nation a fixed royalty. Oh! The financial part of the undertaking has been figured out to a nicety. We know the revenue that the canal would produce and exactly what the company could afford to pay.

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Right here I wish to say, parenthetically, and, of course, not by stating that I am not a prospective officer or member of this canal company, that I will file with my name on the navy list, and that I have no other ambition. We may now go on to the second premise.

NO TROUBLE ABOUT CAPITAL.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—Yes, sir; the financial premise, which may properly enough, I fancy, be called the major.

ADMIRAL AMMEN—Upon this score, after the consultations that have been had in Washington during the past two weeks, I can speak unequivocally. Financial capitalists alone will furnish the money. The money can be had with equal readiness from Great Britain, and a number of leading bankers in the United States have agreed to raise the funds in this country. I do not speak at random when I say that the amount can be raised three or four times over.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—If I have properly followed you, Admiral, the public announcement of General Grant's assumption of the presidency of the Nicaragua Canal Company merely awaits the arrival of the official copy of the decree of the Nicaraguan government. This "decree of paper" alone prevents you from stating what has already taken place, in fact. Do I follow you?

ADMIRAL AMMEN—You do. He will certainly accept the duties of the office.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—The concession being assured as you say, and the money being ready as you declare, and these being the only conditions upon which General Grant insists, it can be positively stated that the Nicaragua Canal Company, with General Grant at its head, will be organized at an early day?

ADMIRAL AMMEN—Undoubtedly so.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—And General Grant will accept the place?

ADMIRAL AMMEN—He certainly will. He will make it the crowning effort of his life.

AN EX-CELESTIAL LESSON.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—Now that this great point

is settled and the inevitable conclusion you indicate reached, I desire to ask one more question. What effect will M. De Lesseps' visit to the Panama route have upon his scheme?

ADMIRAL AMMEN—I am glad you asked me that question, and I will answer frankly. His visit could not have been better timed. He will find the Chagres River at a state of flood that will sweep away all his illusions and his dreams. On the 23rd of last month the Chagres River had swollen to a height of forty feet above its normal condition. This would put the bottom of M. De Lesseps' canal one hundred feet under water and not even his most expert engineers would be able to find it at this time. The flood had ceased. You see Mr. Menocal and I know something about that region and have not gone into the matter as other people's advice, as my good friend De Lesseps has. The rainy season will be at its height when he reaches there and he will learn a few facts that will be of infinite use to him.

HERALD CORRESPONDENT—The San Juan and Colorado rivers are free from this danger, then?

ADMIRAL AMMEN—All the drainage in the wet season has been provided for in the plans prepared, and the only serious obstacles which the Nicaragua route presents are the two harbors. It is wise to tell the truth, and these are our only ugly facts.

Here the interview ended.

FINE ARTS.

THE SHERWOOD-HART SALE—FIRST EVENING—THIRTY-THREE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FOUR DOLLARS FOR EIGHTY CANVASES.

Chickering Hall was well filled but not crowded last evening at the first day's sale of the important Sherwood-Hart collection, which for some days before had been on exhibition at the National Academy of Design. The prices were, as a rule, low, but picked up a good deal toward the last, when the bidding became somewhat lively. Before commencing the sale the auctioneer, Robert Somerville, who acted for the Messrs. Leavitt, read a letter to S. P. Avery, who has charge of the sale, from the owner of the pictures, assuring buyers of straightforward dealing. The first picture of interest was the "Schenck," which Mr. Charles W. Smith got for the low figure of \$300. He also secured an excellent "Boulogne," "Burning Pagoda," at \$550. Fortuny's water color, "A Spanish Lady," was very low at \$110. Irving's "The Connoisseurs" sold well at \$500. An excellent little "Villon" sold to Mr. T. Y. Van Velsigh at \$100. "The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence" was not worth more than \$50. Mr. Charles W. Smith, when S. J. Guy's "Baby's Bedtime" reached \$1,000 there was applause, and it brought a very full value at \$1,225. The "Madison" cost \$1,000, and \$900, the price at which it was secured by Knickerbocker, was much below the market value.

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